



CITY OF SUGAR LAND

April 26, 2021

The Honorable Joe Deshotel – Committee Chair
House Committee on Land and Resource Management
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

RE: OPPOSE HB 1877

Dear Chairman Deshotel:

The City of Sugar Land (City) appreciates the opportunity to testify in opposition to **HB 1877** and **HB 1878** by **Gates**. Both bills are similar in that they seek to bypass city regulation for repairs to vacant buildings.

HB 1877 would prohibit a city from requiring the owner of a vacant residential building, when repairing damage to the building, to improve the building to a condition that is better than would have been legally acceptable before the damage occurred, including requiring conformance to updated building code standards. Building codes are minimum requirements that help safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of all building occupants. Although the City does not require buildings to be in “better condition” after repairs, the City does require that the work associated with the repairs complies with most up-to-date building codes. Sometimes, it is because buildings are not in compliance with the most recent codes that those buildings fail in the first place. Therefore, it would be irresponsible to allow a structure to be repaired using those same exact standards.

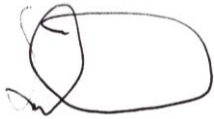
HB 1878 would prohibit a city from adopting or enforcing an ordinance or other regulation that requires an owner of a vacant residential building to obtain a permit to conduct repairs to a building if the repairs are necessary to protect public safety or prevent further damage to the building. Permits are required by cities in order to ensure the safety of the work and its compliance with building, construction, and zoning codes. Although the bill seeks to protect an owner’s ability to guard their property from further damage, the bill completely does away with permitting and therefore places the property owner and the public at risk. As a way of addressing the author’s intent to quickly address repairs, the City met with the author to describe Sugar Land’s expedited permitting process which is consistent with the 2015 International Code Council’s “family of codes” and includes the 2015 International Building Code. Under this process, repairs can begin immediately, however, a permit and inspection would still be required before the work is finalized. This process ensures the protection of the property from further damage while also ensuring that the property has the benefit

of a qualified inspector who checks that the work is safe and in compliance with the City's building codes. Because cities currently have this ability, there is no need to change state law.

In conclusion, it appears that HB 1877 and HB 1878 have the unintended consequence of jeopardizing public safety at the expense of a speedier permitting process. For these reasons, the City of Sugar Land respectfully opposes HB 1877 and HB 1878.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. Please feel free to contact the City should you have any questions regarding our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe R. Zimmerman". The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

Joe R. Zimmerman
Mayor

cc: Members of the House Committee on Land and Resource Management
The Honorable Joan Huffman, State Senator, District 17
The Honorable Lois Kolkhorst, State Senator, District 18
The Honorable Jacey Jetton, State Representative, District 26
The Honorable Ron Reynolds, Sate Representative, District 27
The Honorable Gary Gates, State Representative, District 28
The Honorable Phil Stephenson, State Representative, District 85